

UNITED STATES CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION
Office of the Executive Director
Interagency Advisory Group
1900 E Street, N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20415

Minutes of the Committee on
Job Evaluation
February 2, 1977

The meeting was chaired by Paul A. Katz, Chief, Standards Division. Copies of the day's agenda were distributed as the meeting began and included the following topics:

--plans for issuance of first FES standards

--actions taken on FES

- o analysis of comments
- o resolution of problems/concerns
- o revisions of FES materials

--fifteen-day objection period on first eight standards

--prospects for standards production

I. Plans for Issuance of First FES Standards

a) Five Classification Standards to be Issued

Eugene Dahlman, Assistant Chief of the Standards Division, announced that five of the first eight FES Standards will be issued by late March. These occupations are Nurse, GS-610, Dental Therapy Technician, GS-681, Mail and File, GS-305, Accounting Technician, GS-525, and Mechanical Engineer, GS-830. When issued, a 15-day period will be provided to allow agencies and organizations to object to and request reconsideration of the standards before they are printed in final form. (See later sections of these minutes for discussion of the objection procedures).

b) Standards May Be Issued Individually or in a Package

Mr. Dahlman explained that the first five FES standards may be issued individually or may be in one package depending upon the readiness of the several standards. However, he assured the group that whether released individually or at one time, the due dates for objections will be staggered to provide agencies with staff time to carefully review and consider each standard.

c) Revised Introduction to FES and Primary Standard to be Included in Issuance Package

Along with the first standards issued, the Standards Division also will provide copies of the revised Introduction to FES and Primary Standard and an explanatory memorandum describing the changes made and the reasons for them.

II. Actions Taken on FES

Jean Newton, Methods Development Section, Standards Division, discussed actions taken within the Standards Division on FES in recent months.

a) Analysis of Comments

--Agencies were clearly in favor of the system, but had some recommendations for refinements in methodology.

--Trial application of the first draft FES standards in 1976 indicated a significantly higher rate of positions classified to the same grade than in the 1973 field test of FES. This was attributed to the addition of the series factor-level descriptions as classification tools, better training for classifiers, and standards developed on the basis of extensive occupational studies.

b) Resolution of Problems/Concerns

--Some classifiers preferred using the series factor-level descriptions, rather than benchmarks, to determine the grade of a position. Analysis of the trial application data indicated that benchmarks were used most frequently for occupations that tend to have standard job situations such as Dental Assistant and Nurse. Benchmarks can also be used as a backup to double-check classifications or as a discussion point in talking with supervisors and employees. The requirement that a position may not be point rated using two different benchmarks for Factors 1, 4, and 5 was eliminated. One should arrive at the same grade using either series factor-level descriptions and benchmarks, alone or in any combination.

--A number of reviewers expressed concern about the FES treatment of mixed-grade positions. It has been revised to reflect a procedure similar to that now described in the introduction to position classification standards, i.e., positions are evaluated on the basis of one set of

duties and responsibilities. Work performed for less than the majority of time may be considered in the point rating when it is performed on a reasonably frequent basis (not incidental, temporary, or emergency) and requires a materially higher level of qualifications.

--Although two agencies commented on the possible disruptions in career patterns in two-grade interval occupations because more positions might be classified in even grades GS-6/8/10, trial application data indicated that a relatively small change in the number of even grades should be anticipated.

--In response to the Commission's question whether or not there should be gaps in the grade conversion chart, reviewers were overwhelmingly for a "no-gap" chart.

c) Revisions of Primary Standard

- Knowledge - The first five levels were revised:

--Deleted reference to peripheral equipment operated and to office support skills.

--Expanded descriptions of technical knowledges and added progression of training through the levels.

- Complexity

--Without significantly changing the factor the former two-concept factor has been changed to three concepts:

- 1) Nature of the Assignment,
- 2) Difficulty in Identifying What Needs to be Done, and
- 3) Difficulty and Originality Involved in Performing the Work

- Personal Contacts

--Revised to avoid the impression that levels progress on the basis of the prestige of the person contacted, and provided more rationale for why the contact is difficult.

- Physical Demands

--Added reference to FPM Chapter 550 regarding premium pay for work involving physical hardship on an intermittent or irregular basis.

- Work Environment

--Added the same reference to FPM Chapter 550 and stressed knowledge of safety regulations to avoid mishap or discomfort.

--Classifiers should be careful in treating this factor. If this factor of a position description is point rated above the first level, the employee may not be eligible for hazard pay. A distinction must be made between intermittent and irregular versus regular and recurring duties.

Questions on hazardous duty pay followed the presentation by Jean Newton:

Q: What about the terms regular and recurring? How do we determine that duties fit this definition?

A: The definition should be consistent with the one you are now using and the introduction to position classification standards.

Q: Are we jeopardizing the employee's opportunity for hazard pay if we point rate Factor 9 above the minimum?

A: We only intend to point out that one should be careful in evaluating Factor 9. When special precautions are taken to avoid a hazard, there is a tendency to want to emphasize this fact in a position description. Regulations in FPM Chapter 550 apply when the hazard is of an intermittent and irregular nature.

III. Fifteen-Day Objection Period on First Eight Standards

Mr. Paul Katz, Chief of the Standards Division, discussed the 15-day objection period, making the following points:

a) Background

In recognition of the significant change which the first FES standards represent, there has been a rather general desire expressed that the Commission provide an opportunity for further review of the first FES standards before implementation begins. Therefore, special ad hoc procedures have been adopted which provide for a limited second review and an opportunity to object to the first eight FES standards.

b) Comprehensive Analysis

A comprehensive analysis of the facts considered by the Standards Division in making its determination on the standard will be furnished with the first FES standards. The analysis will provide to agencies the rationale for the disposition of their comments on the draft standard. Agencies should review the analysis very carefully before considering the submission of an objection to the approved standard since the primary points relating to the standard will have been discussed and may provide satisfactory explanations for the standard's content.

c) Fifteen Calendar Days

- A limited review period of 15 calendar days has been set to assure the timely issuance of final standards and implementation of FES. The standards have been reviewed previously by agencies in draft form and should not now require an extensive period for further review. In addition, the "comprehensive analysis" provided with each standard should facilitate this second review.
- The standards packets will be mailed to agencies and organizations. In order to assure at least 15 days for review, the due dates set for the receipt of any objections will take the mailing time into account.

d) Final Action on Objections Determined by Bureau Director

- Any objections submitted to the Bureau Director should show a substantive basis for requesting reconsideration of the standard. The Bureau Director will consider the objections and determine what action, if any, will be taken.

e) Objecting Parties Will Be Informed of Bureau Director's Decision

- Objecting parties who have submitted written substantive objections will be informed of the Bureau Director's decision on disposition of the objection and reasons for the decision.

f) Implementation Instructions

- The standards should not be used as a basis for any personnel action until official notification for their use has been given by the Civil Service Commission. If the decision of the Bureau Director is to implement the standards without change, agencies may, upon receipt of the notification letter from the Commission, implement the standards without awaiting the final printed copies of the standards. If the Bureau Director's decision is to make changes, the revised standards will be distributed as expeditiously as possible.

Questions to Mr. Katz followed:

Q: In mentioning March as the time for five of the standards to be issued, does this mean issued for the 15-day objection period or for implementation?

A: They will be issued for the 15-day objection period by the end of March.

Q: Will a date be set by which time the standards must be implemented?

A: No. The same implementation provisions will be followed for FES standards as for classification standards in the past.

Q: To what points will the standards packets be sent within an agency?

A: Packets will go to headquarters points only.

Q: Will special pay retention or other special provisions be available for handling any downgradings resulting from implementation of FES?

A: Present pay retention provisions of the FPM will be applicable. While the Commission has developed in recent years a number of legislative proposals for modifying those pay retention provisions, action on the proposals has not been taken.

IV. Prospects for Standards Production

a) Forty Classification Standards are in Various Stages of Progress

Mr. Dahlman listed the following occupations for which draft standards will be issued first:

GS-027	Crop Insurance Administration
160	Equal Opportunity
309	Correspondence Clerk
334	Computer Specialist
335	Computer Aid and Technician
350	Office Machine Operating
392	General Communications Equipment Operating
540	Voucher Examiner
603	Physician's Assistant
630	Dietitian
673	Hospital Housekeeping
685	Public Health Program Specialist
690	Industrial Hygiene
701	Veterinary Medical Science
1020	Illustrator
1173	Housing Management
1311	Physical Science Technician
1320	Chemistry
1896	Border Patrol
18XX	Customs Patrol
2121	Railroad Safety

Those to follow at later dates are:

GS-332	Computer Operator
341	Administrative Officer
460	Forestry
560	Budget Administration
622	Medical Aid
819	Environmental Health Engineer
10XX	Language Specialist
11XX	Housing Referral Specialist
1370	Cartographer
1371	Cartographic Technician
2125	Highway Safety Management
2152	Air Traffic Control
000	PACE
081	Fire Protection and Prevention
301	General Clerical and Administration
330	Digital Computer Systems Administration
345	Program Analysis
385	Teletypist
390	Communications Relay Operation

b) Review of Draft Standards

- Those standards in process will be released as they are ready. This may mean that agencies will receive draft standards singly or in packets of several drafts together. However, if several are released together as a packet, the due dates for comments will be staggered to allow agencies opportunity for adequate review and comment on the draft.

Handouts to attendees were:

- Draft copies of the revised "Introduction to the Factor Evaluation System," including the Primary Standard.
- Interim report of the Subcommittee on Classifier Training and Career Development on the results of its questionnaire on classifier training.
- The January 28, 1977, report of the Joint Subcommittee on Position Management. Comments on the report are invited and should be sent to Paul A. Katz, Chief, Standards Division, U.S. Civil Service Commission, Washington, D.C. 20415.